



NEWS RELEASE

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DHS OFFERING EXTENDED HOURS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATIONS DURING TENNCARE RE-DETERMINATION PROCESS

Special accommodations such as extended hours, telephone interviews, and home visits are being offered at Department of Human Services offices in all of Tennessee's 95 counties in order to meet the needs of citizens who are being re-determined for TennCare eligibility.

The Department received approval to hire 227 new eligibility counselors prior to beginning the re-determination process July 1. An additional 250 temporary positions have been approved since then to assist DHS staff and the Department expects to add another 140 temporary positions in the next few days. A total of 35 new positions have been added to the staff manning DHS's TennCare Helpline (1-888-863-6178).

The Department has installed 49 new telephone systems in order to increase the number of phone lines available in county offices. Another 15 phone systems are scheduled for replacement or upgrading in coming weeks.

Eligibility counselors are processing applications at 26 community mental health center sites and there are also 40 counselors based at hospitals across the state.

DHS began the re-determination process in July after approval of TennCare's new federal waiver. The waiver requires Tennessee to verify that all non-Medicaid TennCare enrollees are still eligible for the program.

"We are opening offices early, closing them late and working on Saturdays in many locations," said DHS Commissioner Natasha K. Metcalf. "We're making home visits, completing eligibility interviews over the telephone, and we are conducting group interviews at our offices and at alternative locations.

"We've increased the number of phone lines at several of our busiest offices, and we continue to explore avenues to make the process as easy as possible," she added. "Our staff has done a tremendous job in keeping the re-determination process moving forward."

Metcalf reminded TennCare enrollees who still need to schedule an appointment that they can simply bring or mail their application to their county DHS office instead of phoning. DHS must receive the application prior to the applicant's deadline, however.

"Once our office receives a TennCare enrollee's application, our staff will then contact the individual and schedule an appointment," she said. "They will not be dropped from the program while waiting for that call or for their appointment."